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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003287

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TAGS: [AF](#) [CH](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [PARM](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)  
SUBJECT: COMPETING PERCEPTIONS OF PRC ACTIVITIES IN  
AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson for reasons  
1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: PRC contacts define Chinese interests in Afghanistan within the context of China's international image, security requirements, commercial goals and bilateral relationships with key countries. Afghan Embassy contacts here lament the PRC's narrow focus on projects in Afghanistan that profit Chinese companies. Our Pakistani Embassy contact, by contrast, emphasized increasing PRC interest in the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan and believes Chinese investment in Afghanistan will bring Afghanistan and Pakistan closer together. Our Afghan Embassy contacts suggested that the U.S. and Afghanistan coordinate requests for PRC assistance in Afghanistan in order to underscore to PRC officials that Afghanistan views U.S. requests as its own development priority. PRC reluctance to play a larger role in the Friends of Democratic Pakistan stems in part from an unwillingness to set a precedent for multilateral coordination of PRC bilateral assistance, according to our Pakistan Embassy contact. END SUMMARY.

#### Factors Shaping PRC Policy on Afghanistan

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¶2. (C) MFA-affiliated China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) South Asia scholar Rong Ying told PolOff December 3 that China weighed four factors in determining its policy on Afghanistan: 1) China wanted its assistance to Afghanistan to bolster its image in the Muslim world; 2) China worried that Afghanistan's inability to control all of its territory created space for anti-China groups to congregate and train; 3) China viewed Afghanistan as a future crossroads for energy pipelines and transportation infrastructure corridors to Central Asia, India and the Middle East and wanted to accelerate progress toward this outcome; and 4) China did not want its involvement in Afghanistan to impact negatively its bilateral relationships with key states, notably the United States, Pakistan and India.

#### PRC Perception of Security Environment in Af/Pak

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¶3. (C) Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) South Asia scholar Hu Shisheng outlined for PolOff on December 2 four indicators that the security environment in Afghanistan and Pakistan was deteriorating, with potentially negative consequences for China's own security: 1) the numbers of Afghan Taliban fighters had steadily increased annually, from roughly 7,000 in 2006 to over 25,000 now; 2) the Afghan Army had not figured out how to retain soldiers, as demonstrated by its 25-percent attrition rate; 3) the Afghan Taliban was now providing sanctuary to members of the

Pakistan Taliban in Nuristan Province, which suggested that the relationship between the two groups was growing closer; and 4) Uighur fighters that were previously concentrated in South Waziristan had dispersed following the Pakistan Army's clear-and-hold operation there in October. Hu explained that the PRC had been attempting to build an information network within South Waziristan from the village level up to locate and track suspected fighters, but had encountered difficulty identifying human sources that were reliable. Hu explained that Pakistan's responsiveness to Chinese requests for assistance in locating alleged Uighur fighters was inconsistent. Pakistan had handed over to China "a couple" of the 22 suspected Uighur fighters that China had demanded in 2007, according to Hu, but lately had not provided any useful information.

#### PRC Just Wants to Make Money in Afghanistan

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¶4. (C) Afghan EmbOffs expressed frustration over China's relatively limited assistance, complaining that Chinese officials offered little beyond vague promises of assistance "within China's capacity" and insisted on "mutually beneficial" projects that would profit Chinese companies.

"China just wants to make money in Afghanistan, nothing more," according to Afghan EmbOff Ahmad Najmpoor on December

¶3. Afghan EmbOff Mirwais Nab added that China would be careful to keep its assistance projects separate from other donors in order to avoid being seen working side by side with U.S. and NATO forces. Pakistan Embassy Counselor Shafqat Ali Khan separately told PolOffs December 4 that although there had not been any tangible shift in Chinese assistance

BEIJING 00003287 002 OF 002

activities in South Asia in recent years, PRC authorities had shown "escalating interest" in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Khan surmised that PRC authorities were still determining how best to respond to the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

#### Divergent Views on PRC Investment at Aynak Copper Mine

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¶5. (C) Afghan EmbOff Mirwais Nab complained that the PRC was not providing any financial assistance or training to support the roughly 1,600 Afghan National Police guarding China's investment at the Aynak copper mine. UK EmbOff Martin Duffy told EmbOffs December 7 that the PRC already had one company of de-commissioned People's Armed Police (PAP) providing security in the vicinity of Aynak, and noted that the British were pressing China to increase security assistance and provide in-country training for Afghan security personnel, but that the Chinese had thus far rebuffed UK requests. Pakistani Embassy's Khan expressed optimism that China's investment at the Aynak copper mine would lead to greater Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation, given that all of the extracted copper would transit Pakistan.

#### Afghan EmbOffs Suggest Coordinating Requests to PRC

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¶6. (C) The United States and Afghanistan should coordinate their requests for Chinese assistance in Afghanistan, according to Afghan EmbOff Nab. Coordinating requests would allow Afghanistan to double-track U.S. asks through its bilateral channel with China and demonstrate that Afghanistan viewed U.S. requests as its own development priority, Nab said. He identified agriculture as a priority area where China could do more to improve irrigation systems and invest in expanding agricultural production, particularly of fruit products in the relatively stable northern provinces. Nab demonstrated a detailed understanding of the contents of Deputy SRAP Feldman's November 11 working-level consultations with MFA Asian Affairs Department DDG Sun Weidong, at one point explaining that PRC officials were pleased with the U.S. delegation's focus on development assistance vice military programs.

17. (C) Pakistan EmbOff Khan stated that most preparations for Friends of Democratic Pakistan (FoDP) ministerial meetings were handled in Islamabad, and that the Pakistani Embassy's role was limited to delivering updates and invitations to the MFA. Khan did not give any indication that Beijing would host a round of the FoDP, and suggested that the PRC's relatively modest participation in the FoDP stemmed from its unwillingness to set a precedent for multilateral coordination of its bilateral assistance. CIIS' Rong separately explained that China was reluctant to host a FoDP ministerial because it did not want to convene an international meeting that would apply pressure on Pakistan.  
HUNTSMAN